

A 1734. January 20
Copy of a Letter sent to the
Right Reverend Father in God,
Edward Lord Bishop of Gloucester,
from a Clergy-man of the Church
of England, living in Bristol, giving
an Account of one Thomas Perks of
Mangorsfield near the same City, and
the Conversation he had with Fa-
miliar Spirits.

My Lord,

Being inform'd by Mr. Shute, of your
Lordship's Desire, that I should commu-
nicate to you what I had known concerning a
certain Person who was acquainted with
spirits to his own Destruction, I have made
bold to give you the Trouble of this Letter,
and I hope my Desire to gratifie your Lordship
in every Particular may be an Apology for the
length hereof

I had formerly given an Account to the late
Bishop of Hereford, in which there are probably
some things contain'd which I do not now
remember, and which (if your Lordship could
inquire from his Lady, who lives near Gloucester)
could be more authentick.

Some

(A)

Some time since, whilst I was Curate to Dr. R— Rector of St. N—s in this City, I began to be acquainted with one *Thomas Perks*, (a Man about twenty Years of Age, who lived with his Father at *Mangorsfield*, and was by Trade a Blacksmith) and contracted an Intimacy with him, he being not only a very good temper'd Man, but extremely well skill'd in the Mathematical Studies which was his constant Delight, viz. *Arithmetick*, *Geometry*, *Gauging*, *Surveying*, *Astronomy* and *Algebra*; he had a Notion of the Perpetual Motion, much like the Wheel in *Archimedes* his Mathematical Magick, to which he had made some Improvements, and which as he said was demonstrable from Mathematical Principles, (tho' I could never believe it) accordingly I have seen an Iron Wheel, to which he intended to add several things of his own Invention, in order to finish the same, but thinking it of no Use, and being otherwise unfortunately engaged, it was never perfected.

He addicted himself so much to Astronomy, that he could not only calculate the motions of the Planets, but an Eclipse also, and demonstrate every problem, in *Spherical Trigonometry* from Mathematical Principles in which he

would

would discover a clear force of reason, though
 he very frequently would mistake in the quan-
 tities of Syllables. When one Mr B—, now
 Minister of St. F—s in this City endeavoured
 the setting up a Mathematical School, I advised
 him to this *Thomas Perks* for an Acquaintance,
 by whom (as he told me) he found a far greater
 Proficiency in these Studies than he expected or
 could have imagin'd. After this, he applied
 himself to Astrology, and could sometimes
 calculate Nativities and resolve horary Que-
 stions, &c. which as he told did oftentimes
 prove very true, but he was not satisfied with it
 because there was nothing in it which tended to
 a Mathematical Demonstration. When by
 the Providence of God I was settled in T—
 Parish, and having not seen him for sometime,
 he came to me and (we being in private) asked
 me my Opinion very seriously concerning the
 lawfulness of conversing with Spirits and after
 I had given my Thoughts in the Negative,
 and confirmed them with the best Reasons I
 could, he told me that he had considered all
 those Arguments and believed they all related
 only to Conjurat[i]on, but there was an innocent
 society with them, which a Man might use if
 he made no Compacts with them, did no
 harm

harm by their means, and was not curious to pry into hidden things; and that he himself had discoursed with them, and had heard them sing &c. to his great Satisfaction, and gave an Offer to me at one time, and to Mr. B — at another, that if I would go with him one night to *Kings-wood*, we should see them and hear them both speak and sing, and talk with them whatever we had a mind to, and we should return very safe: but neither of us had the Courage to venture: I told him of the Subtily of the Devil to delude Mankind, and to transform himself into an Angel of Light; but he could not believe that it was the Devil. I had severall Conferences on this Subject, but could never convince him; in all which I never observed the least disorder of Mind; his Discourse was very rational, and (to try him) I proposed a Question in Astronomy relating to the Projection of a Sphere, which he projected and resolved, and afterwards did so demonstrate from the Mathematicks as to demonstrate at the same time that his Brain was free from the least Tincture of Madness or Distraction.

Having this Opportunity I asked him several Particulars concerning the Methods he used, and the discourse he had with them, he told me he had also a Book whose Directions he Followed, and accordingly in the dead time of the Night he went out to a Cross way with a Lanthorn and Candle which was consecrated for that purpose, with several Incantations; he had also a consecrated Chalk consisting of several Mix

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tures, and with this he used to make a Circle, at what Distance he thought fit, within which no Spirit had Power to enter : after this he invoked the Spirits by using several Forms of Words, some of which he told me were taken out of the holy Scripture, and therefore he thought them lawful, without considering how they might be wrested to his Destruction ; accordingly these Spirits appeared to him which he called for, in the Shape of little Maids, about a Foot and half high, and played without the Circle : at first he was somewhat affrighted, but after some small Acquaintance this Antipathy in Nature wore off, and he became pleased with their Company ; He told me they spake with a very shrill Voice like an Ancient Woman ; He asked them if there was a God, they told him there was ; he asked them if there was a Heaven or a Hell, they said there was ; he asked them what Place Heaven was, which they described as a Place of great Glory and Happiness ; and he asked them what what Place Hell was, and they bad him ask no more Questions of that Nature, for it was a dreadful thing to relate it ; (*the Devils believe and tremble :*) He asked them what sort of Method and Order they had among themselves, they told him that they were divided into three Orders, that they had a Chief whose Residence was in the Air, that he had several Counsellors, which were placed by him in the Form of a Globe, and he in the Centre, which was the chiefest Order ; another Order was employed in going to and fro from thence to the Earth, to carry Intelligence from these lower Spirits ; and a third to act upon Earth according to the Directions they should receive from those in the Air ; This Description was very surprizing ; but being contrary to the Account we have in the Scripture

of the Hierarchy of the blessed Angels, made me conclude they were Devils; but I could not convince him of it: He had had them sing, and they went to some Distance behind a Bush, from whence he could hear a perfect Confort, but of such Musick as he never heard the like, and in the upper Part he could hear something very harsh and shrill like a Reed, but as it was managed did give a particular Grace to all the rest.

: About a quarter of a Year after he came again to me, and told me he wished he had taken my Advice, for he thought he had done that which would cost him his Life, and which he did heartily repent of; and indeed his Eyes and Countenance did shew a great Alteration: I asked him what he had done; he told me that being bewitch'd with his Acquaintance he resolved to proceed farther in this Art, and to have some Familiar Spirits at his Command, according to the Directions of his Book, which was to have a Book made of what he called *Virgins Parchment*, and consecrated with several Incantations; also particular Ink, Inkhorn, Pen, &c. for his Purpose: With these he was to go out (as usually) to a Cross-way, and called up a Spirit, asked him his Name, which he was to put in the first Page of his Book, and this was his Familiar; thus he was to do by as many as he pleased, writing their Names in distinct Pages, only one in a Leaf; and then whenever he took the Book and opened it, the Spirit whose Name appeared should appear also; when he did thus the Familiar Spirit he had was called *Malki*, (a Word in Hebrew of an untoward Signification) after this they appeared faster than he desired, and in most dismal Shapes,

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like Serpents, Lyons, Bears, &c. and hissing at him, or attempting to throw Spears or Balls of Fire at him; this did very much affright him, and the more that he found it not in his Power to lay them, insomuch that his Hair (as he told me) stood upright, and he expected every Moment to be torn to pieces, this was in December about Midnight, when he continued there in a Sweat till break of Day when they left him, and from that time he was never well as long as he lived.

In his Sicknefs he frequently came to this City to consult with Mr. J---b an Apothecary in Broad-street concerning a Cure, but I know not whether he told him the Original Cause or no: he also came to me at the same time and owned every Matter of Fact until the last, and still insisted that when he did any thing of this Nature he was deluded in his Conscience to think it lawful, but he is since convinced to the contrary: He still declared he made no Compacts with any of those Spirits, he never did any Harm by their Means, he never pryed into the Future State of himself and Others, and expressed an hearty Repentance and Detestation of his Sin, and also a stedfast Faith in Christ for the Pardon of the same, and the Salvation of his Soul: So that though these Methods cost him his Life in this World, yet I have great Reason to believe him happy in the other.

I am

I am not certain whether he gave this Account to any other except my self (though he communicated something of it to Mr. B---e--- the Minister of St. J----- in this City) perhaps your Lordship may be farther informed from his Relations and Neighbours in Mangorsfield, which is in Gloucestershire, not above a Mile out of the Road from this City to Bath. I have frequently told the Story, but never mentioned his Name before; and therefore if your Lordship hath a Design of printing such Accounts as these, I desire it may be with such Tenderness to his Memory as he deserved, and so as may not be the least Prejudice to his Relations, who have the deserved Character of honest and sober People; however I never heard any thing to the contrary.

27 APR 65
I am your Lordship's

Most Dutiful Son

and Servant,

Licensed according to Order.

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